

## **Jesus, King of Worship**

### **Psalm 95**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 12-22-2013

### **Introduction**

The Psalm we just read is a Psalm designed to bring Reformation to worship. And as such, it was very tightly connected to the three-fold purpose for each Hanukkah that you see in the Old Testament. As most of you know, our family enjoys celebrating Christmas Jewish style, which is Hanukkah. And every recorded celebration of Hanukkah that we have from the time of Moses to the time of Nehemiah had three purposes: to reform fleshly worship, to dedicate the temple to God, and to prophetically point forward to the birth of Jesus. It's one of the lesser festivals. In fact, it's not even listed in Leviticus 23. But it was important enough to be celebrated by Jesus in John 10, and since the whole Gospel of John was written and organized around all the temple festival liturgies (including Hanukkah) it was also considered important by the writer of that Gospel.

And all four celebrations of Hanukkah that are recorded in the Old Testament are eight-day celebrations that point to the birth of Jesus (that's day one) and the circumcision of Jesus (which was day eight). Interestingly, the original tabernacle was set up on Chislev 25 (the Jewish equivalent of December 25) and the first sacrifice was on Nisan 14, the day that Jesus died. And you find the same date of Chislev 25 when the temple was purged of fleshly Baal worship and re-dedicated to God under Hezekiah. You see the same date of the dedication of the temple under Nehemiah. And you see the same date of Chislev 25 for the purifying of the temple under the Maccabees. I won't get into the whole theology of Hanukkah. That's not my point this morning. If you are curious, I've written a book on the subject that is a free download. I believe that Christmas is clearly rooted in the Old Testament.

But my point in bringing it up is that the subject of our Psalm is one of the three core messages of Hanukkah. It speaks of the King of worship reforming and restoring true worship. So for our Christmas meditation today we are going to be receiving ten instructions from Jesus, the King of Worship.

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## I. The King of worship wants each of you to sing (vv. 1-2)

And the first instruction may seem pretty obvious and pretty basic. It's that the King of worship wants each of you to sing. In the ancient world this was revolutionary. It wasn't simply a call for the professionals to sing. Most religions in the world do not allow lay people to sing. That's something for the experts. And sometimes Christians themselves can cringe at how poorly congregations sound. And if all you are thinking about is the technical excellence, then yes, you will leave it up to the experts. But each of you is commanded to sing because singing is part of God's reformation of your heart. It's essential to worship, and it changes you.

When C.S. Lewis first became a Christian he cringed at congregational singing. In fact, he didn't want to come to church because it sounded so terrible. He confessed,

When I first became a Christian, about fourteen years ago, I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and I wouldn't go to [church]... I disliked very much their hymns, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. [And I think some of you can identify with his feelings because not every piece we sing is first, second, or even third-rate music. When we find better music, we retire the stuff that isn't so good. Anyway, he continued by saying,]. But as I went on I saw the merit of it. I came up against different people of quite different outlooks and different education, and then gradually my conceit just began peeling off. I realized that the hymns (which *were* sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit.<sup>1</sup>

His point was that there never will be congregational music that is perfect, but the King of worship still wants us to sing despite the fact that he realizes that you probably are not going to do it that well. There is something beyond the quality that is important to singing.

Some people cringe at music because it can very easily become a show-off contest by performers. And there is a danger in that. That is exactly what happened in the time of Isaiah and Amos. And when that happens, there can be the temptation to do away with music. Over the past fifty years there have been a lot of music wars in Western churches. There have been wars over whether to use instruments, exclusive psalmody, exclusive hymnody, exclusive contemporary, 80's music versus 90's music, etc., etc., etc. And believe it or not, there is a small movement of churches that has been so bothered by the controversies over music that they have decided that

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, "Answers to Questions on Christianity," (1944), ans. 16, pp. 61-62.

music is a no-win situation (everyone has their own opinions), and so they have opted to have no music whatsoever. That's not reform; that's hiding your head in the sand. Verses 1 and 2 say,

**Psa. 95:1** Oh come, let us [and notice the word "us"] sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

**Psa. 95:2** Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

He is trying to argue them into singing. Some Christians have engaged in singing simply out of a reluctant duty. Several years ago a pastor told me that he would do away with singing altogether if it wasn't commanded in the Scripture. He just endured the singing. But in doing so, he robbed himself of an incredibly important dimension in worship – which is to get out of ourselves; out of our desires, and to seek to minister to the heart of God. In my first pastorate I had one person tell me over and over again, “Skip the singing! I've only come to hear the Word preached!”

And I won't harp on this point, but I do want to emphasize that singing and music are very important to God. We are commanded to sing or make music over 300 times. God had Israel spend a great deal of money on music in the temple. And what God values should help to adjust our perspective as well. Our church's music team used to spend a lot more time prayerfully preparing their music so that we can enter into worship more meaningfully. And as talented as our musicians are, we hope to improve our serve in the coming year. So pray for the music team. It is a hard job to be a musician, and we should not take it for granted. God values music, and we should to. But this first point is that God takes a special delight when each member of the congregation puts his or her whole heart into singing.

## **II. The King of worship wants our emotions engaged, and wants energy and even loudness (vv. 1-5)**

The second principle of reform is that the King of worship wants our emotions engaged, wants energy expended, and even calls for loudness in worship. In verse 2 the King of worship says,

“Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.”

You know the definition of shout, don't you? It's not what we usually do. If you look “shout” up in a dictionary, I think you will realize that it's not something that Dominion Covenant Church does very well. Well, maybe Joel and a couple of others do. But if you've never shouted in singing, you're missing something. Shouting has an impact on the inner man. In fact, Bill Gothard wrote an entire book on what the Bible says about praying and

singing with a loud voice – crying out to God. He points out that a God blesses and entrusts us with certain things when we take a Him at His Word on this issue of energetic singing.

And even beyond that, God has made our bodies and spirits to profoundly influence each other. God made us that way. If our bodies are drooping, our spirits tend to droop. If our bodies are crying out, our spirits tend to come out of their shell as well. And it's weird that the same people who are not in the least bit embarrassed to pour enthusiasm and power into their voices at a football game, cringe at the thought of shouting joyfully in church. I know some of it may be cultural background that predisposes us to not be very outgoing. I understand that. Our family was unbelievably reserved. But I don't see any cultural nuances to this verse. Do you? It sure doesn't seem like it says, "Feel free to shout if your culture allows it, but if not it's OK to mumble your way through the verses of 'Shout to the Lord' while you are slouching in a chair." Now, we will see in a moment that not every musical piece calls for shouting, and maybe not every worship service does. But these words indicate that worship can be celebratory, thankful, enthusiastic, energetic, and even loud. And in our singing we can unleash our emotions in ways that are appropriate to the context.

And speaking of context, I want you to notice that joy is not the only emotion that God calls for in worship. He calls for awe and dependent humility in verses 6-7. And if you look through the other 150 Psalms you will discover that all of our emotions are engaged before our King – grief and sadness; satisfaction and contentment; awe, weeping, joy, and exuberance. Gary Duff sent me a quote from John Calvin this past week that said, "There is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here (Psalms) represented as in a mirror." And he points out that it is not just joy that is expressed in worship. He says, "the Holy Spirit has here drawn all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated." And the conclusion is that since God wants us to sing all 150 Psalms in public worship, that means that by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit He has authorized all of these diverse emotions in public worship. Now I will hasten to say that he does not want emotionalism, which is emotion that is uncontrolled and run amuck. But He does want all of our emotions to be sanctified by His grace and to be lined up to His Word.

So let's think about that a bit. Just as I encourage our worship team to try to match the speed, intensity, cadence, phrasing, and feel of the music to the words, if we as a congregation are to sing skillfully before the Lord, we

need to get our brains in gear with what the words are saying. And when we do that, our emotions, energy levels, and loudness are more likely to be appropriate to the words. We shouldn't be shouting when we sing "As the hart pants for the water brooks, so my soul longs for you, O God." No, that's much more of a yearning that is being expressed. And we shouldn't be exuberant when we sing, "Almighty God, our heavenly Father. We have sinned against You and against our fellow man." Shouting just doesn't fit. On the other hand, if we simply mumble the words of "The earth shakes at the sound of his voice" we will do it injustice and show to God that we are not singing praises with the understanding, as Psalm 47 commands us to do, and as 1 Corinthians 14:15 commands us to do. But even with that hymn, each verse has a different feel, and should be approached musically and emotionally in a different way. And if the congregation can be more sensitive to this as the music team is being trained on this over the next year, hopefully we can become more sensitive to the emotional dimensions of various songs in the coming months. Advent is a lot more difficult for us to find gripping music. But let me read the words of the last song that I just cited and have you try to imagine what kind of emotion is appropriate to these words:

*The earth shakes at the sound of his voice.*

*The nations tremble before him. The idols of men are all falling  
at the feet of the Lord our God, at the feet of the Lord our God.*

As I read those words, I get the impression that we ought to be excited about that theology. And in the next words you can almost imagine yourself as a warrior shouting agreement with his commander on the front lines of the battlefield. It says,

*The Lord is a warrior fearless is he; the Lord is mighty in battle.*

*His armies outnumber his enemies.*

[Chorus B:] *When they shout the strongholds of Satan come crashing down  
and Babylon is falling, falling down.* [Chorus A]

But there is a change of emotion in verse 2, and if we shout through it, it's not quite right. There is still strength of confidence; there is still momentum, but it says,

*The Lord is a Savior gracious is he, the Lord is full of compassion.*

*His army is also his family.*

That is still showing a strong, joyful, confidence, but it is a bit more subdued. The accompaniment should reflect that, and our singing should reflect that. The point is, that it's not just the music team that needs to think about these things. All of us need to think about the emotion appropriate to the situation. Here is one song that you would sing with an attitude of

humble request, not exuberant delight. It's got strong yearning and longing in it. And you are probably going to sing it a little bit slower. Think about the words:

*Take me past the outer courts, and through the holy place,  
past the brazen altar; Lord, I want to see your face.  
Pass me by the crowds of people, and the priests who sing their praise;  
I hunger and thirst for your righteousness but it's only found one place.  
So take me in to the Holy of Holies, take me in by the blood of the Lamb.  
So take me in to the Holy of Holies, take the coal, cleanse my lips, here I am.*

### **III. The King of worship does not want you to be satisfied with anything less than His presence in worship (v. 2)**

And that's probably a good segue way into point III, which says, "The King of worship does not want you to be satisfied with anything less than His presence in worship." Verse 2 says,

"Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving."

His presence. Hebrews 12 indicates that when we are really worshipping, we are being caught up to the very throne room of God in the heavenly Jerusalem... We are coming into His presence, and our church is joining with the church of all ages in worshipping and adoring His majesty. It is an amazing picture being drawn there. And it takes faith on the part of each worshipper to come into His presence each Sunday.

There have been times in public worship where I have sensed that I have come into the very throne room of God, and others have not. There is an individual aspect to this. Why don't you flip over to Revelation 3, and we will see how even when the majority of the church was lukewarm, God ushered some into His very presence. So not all is lost if you are the only one putting these principles into practice. Revelation 3, beginning to read at verse 17. The first thing that Jesus says is that most in that church didn't recognize that His presence was absent or that they even had a need.

**Rev. 3:17** Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

**Rev. 3:18** I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

**Rev. 3:19** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

**Rev. 3:20** Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Rev. 3:21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Jesus was outside the church knocking on the door, and His absence was not even noticed by most. But anyone who had ears to hear could by faith welcome Jesus, and Jesus would come in towards that person and at least commune with that individual. That individual would be in the very presence of Jesus. Now if the rest of the church really knew that Jesus was not present, they would be mortified. And if they knew how ugly their beautiful worship sounded to God, they would be even more mortified.

But that is exactly what Amos said was happening to his church in his day. In Amos 5 God says,

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. (Amos 5:21-23)

Wow! I bet that took the wind out of their sails. But the wind needed to be taken out of their sails because their worship needed reform. And when you read the passage you will see that there was nothing wrong with the technical excellence. They had the money and the resources to make amazing music at the temple. It was a congregation that thought their worship was great. But the text says that it was all about them and what they enjoyed. They were not focused in on pleasing God and seeing Jesus only.

You can tell whether *Jesus* really is the King of your worship or whether *you* are the king of your worship by *what* you are disappointed over. What disappoints you in worship? I am disappointed when I have failed to come into God's presence. You see, you can have the most excellent music in the world that moves you to tears or that thrills your soul, but if your heart is not poured out before God, the King of worship is not impressed. One of the churches up in Canada where I saw people touching the throne of God with great emotion was a church of about 45 people that had no instruments, poor congregational singing, and lousy preaching. But you could tell that the people loved God and would do anything for Him. I would look around the room and see the tears streaming down their faces as they were oblivious to anything but God. And I was thinking, "Doesn't it bother them that the worship is so bad?" But no, they were worshipping despite the lack of outward technical excellence. They were worshipping. Now we are not downplaying the importance of technical excellence. We will talk about that in a bit. But we are talking about coming into His presence by faith.

Let me illustrate this with Ezekiel 33. That chapter indicates that the worship services led by Ezekiel were so outwardly impressive that huge crowds came to hear him and they constantly talked about the worship services during the week. Ezekiel was the talk of town. You read the last few verses of Ezekiel 33 and you see that they were inviting strangers into church to get in the awesome worship. They were excited about what they had. In fact, Ezekiel thought he had a revival on his hands. And God said, “No. It’s not. Don’t be impressed. They are treating worship like a musical concert and they are treating your preaching like entertainment. But their hearts are far from Me.” Their goal in worship was fleshly. It was not about coming into God’s presence. It was about an emotional experience. And we have already seen that we are not downplaying emotion yoked to serving God, but emotion for emotion’s sake is idolatry.

The bottom line is that only the Spirit of God can enable us to come into His presence like we should. That’s why we must worship in Spirit and in truth. We must pray in the Spirit and have our prayers saturated with the Word. We must sing in the Spirit, but Ephesians and Colossians tell us that the Word must saturate what we sing. Word and Spirit; truth and power. Those two must come together. Philippians 3:3 says that we are to “worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus (there is the focus), and have no confidence in the flesh.” Too much worship flows from confidence in the flesh. But when your focus is on the King of this Universe, it all changes. It all changes.

Years ago I read a book by Tommy Tenney called *The God Chasers*. Though it has some theological errors, its central theme is right on. Let me read from the description on the back cover. It says,

“What is a God chaser? A God chaser is an individual whose hunger exceeds his reach. A God chaser is a person whose passion for God’s presence presses him to chase the impossible in hopes that the uncatchable might catch him. A child chases a loving parent until, suddenly, the strong arms of the father enfold the chaser. The pursuer becomes the captive; the pursued the captor. Paul put it this way: ‘I chase after that I may catch that which apprehended me’” (Phil. 3:12).

Job was a God chaser. He said, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” David was one; he said, “My soul followeth hard after Thee.” Paul was one too: “That I may know Him....” The passionate paths of God chasers can be traced across the pages of history from Moses the stutterer, David the singer, and Paul the itinerant preacher... and countless others who share one common bond: an insatiable hunger to know their Lord.

This Psalm says that worship is all about Him. That's where our focus should be. Brothers and sisters, where there is no presence, there is no worship – we've just got sounds bouncing off the ceiling. And when there is no *longing* for God's presence, worship has been robbed of its very essence. The essence of worship is *not* in the externals, but is *God Himself*. This Psalm wants us to be enraptured with God and the last verses show us that God is not pleased when we are satisfied without Him, no matter what approach we may take to music wars.

Do you hunger for God? Do you long to experience more of His presence? We must enter into worship as God chasers. Notice the personal dimension in this Psalm: “Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our Salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving.” Verse 6: “Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.” Make that your goal.

#### **IV. The King of worship wants musical instruments to be used in worship (v. 2 – meaning of “psalms”)**

The fourth principle is that God calls for musical instruments in worship. And that can be seen in the word “psalms” in verse 2. “Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.” The Hebrew for the word “psalms” is *mizmirot*. And if you look it up in the Hebrew dictionaries (and I have several), they define the term as a song accompanied by musical instruments. It is not used of an unaccompanied song. Sometimes the word is used strictly of instrumental music, but when it is accompanied by the word “sing” it means to sing while accompanied with musical instruments.<sup>2</sup>

And I bring this up because it is so easy for the church to swing to extremes. Because music has become so fleshly in some circles, there are many churches that are moving away from the use of any musical instruments. They have determined that they are just going to worship God in spirit. They have seen the flesh so present in instruments that they are disgusted by them. And I can understand where they are coming from in one respect, but it is not Biblical. But it is a growing movement. There are numerous books that have been written in the last ten years claiming that it is a sin to use a musical instrument in a New Testament church. It's

<sup>2</sup>See for example, *NIDOTTE*, s.v. “זָמַר זָמַר וְזָמַר מִזְמוֹר,” 1:1,091. “1. The basic meaning of the vb. is playing a musical instrument in the context of worship, usually a stringed instrument (“make music,” Ps 33:2; 98:5; 144:9; 147:7), but also a percussion instrument (149:3). More often it has the developed sense of singing to a musical accompaniment (cf. 71:22–23). The nom. זָמַר is used both of music (Amos 5:23) and of accompanied singing (Isa 51:3). In Exod 15:2; Psa 118:14; Isa 12:2 (NIV “my song”), it is more probably to be related to the third root, with the sense “might” (NRSV) or “defence” (REB). The less common nom. זָמַר means a song accompanied by music, and so does the nom. מִזְמוֹר, generally rendered “psalm.”” See also TWOT, Halot, Strongs, KM.

automatically fleshly in their minds. I'm almost finished writing a major rebuttal of that strange thesis. But you do not reform fleshly worship by ignoring the commands of Scripture.

The King of worship commands, “Awake lute and harp!” (Ps. 57:8); “Praise the LORD with the harp!” (Ps. 33:2); “Praise Him with the timbrel ... Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!” (Ps. 150:4); and there many other commands to worship with musical instruments. Every time the Bible commands us to sing a Psalm, it is commanding us to use instruments. Now those same Psalms indicate that even when the instruments are loud, they cannot overwhelm the words; they are servants to the words. And over the next year I am going to be doing some training of the music teams of how musical instruments can serve the words better. But the basic point here is that they can be very useful in undergirding true worship. We can't undo those commands simply because the instruments have been abused.

**V. The King of worship wants you to use His inspired hymnal (“psalms” in v. 2) as well as to imitate Him by creating new songs (cf. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1)**

The fifth principle that this Psalm called for reformation in is the use of Psalms. It is not calling exclusively for the singing of Psalms, but we must not neglect the hymnbook that the King of Worship wrote and gave to us as His gift. That would be to sleight and to insult the King of Worship who crafted the Psalter. In order to honor and bless the King of Worship, I believe that we should sing every Psalm that He has specially crafted for us. All 150. And when you start doing that in faith, you will be transformed. When I started singing the Psalms they transformed me in a number of ways. For example, initially I would do with the Psalms just what I did with hymns and songs – if I didn't believe the theology, I wouldn't sing that phrase or that verse. But when I caught myself doing that with the inspired Psalms, I quickly realized that my theology need to change, not the Psalms. They are inspired. They were powerful in changing me. They struck my heart like a two-edged sword. There is a power in singing the Psalms.

And I admit that the tunes of some Psalms are not that great. As we find better tunes to the Psalms that we sing, we will ditch the old and bring in the new. But some have suggested that we sing fewer Psalms. Sorry. That's not an option. Listen to the following admonitions from the King of Worship:

1Chr. 16:9 Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him...

Psa. 105:2 Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him...

Eph. 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs [notice the order and emphasis – Psalms, which are inspired, hymns, which tie us with history, and spiritual songs which force us to sing some new things], singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. [So even the hymns and songs need to be word based, or it's not the Word of Christ filling our hearts in singing, and they need to be sung by the grace of the Holy Spirit.]

James 5:13 ... Let him sing psalms.

Now, this Psalm doesn't mention it, but there are other places that command the singing of new songs in every generation. So its not just the old stuff that needs to be appreciated, but also the new stuff. From the beginning of this church it has been a pattern that every service must have at least one Psalm, at least one hymn, and at least one contemporary piece. Now that's a challenge to do, and to bring in more Psalms and still keep the emotion appropriate is also a challenge. So pray for us. Sometimes we will emphasize one kind over the other, but we do want to follow the emphasis that the apostle Paul lays out twice. But we are not going to have less contemporary; we just want to make sure that we have a balance.

## **VI. The King of worship is the One that we worship, and we should not share His glory with another (vv. 3-5)**

The sixth principle is that Jesus, the King of worship, is jealous for God's glory and does not want us to share His glory with another. Let's read verses 3-5.

Psa. 95:3 For the LORD *is* the great God, And the great King above all gods.

Psa. 95:4 In His hand *are* the deep places of the earth; The heights of the hills *are* His also.

Psa. 95:5 The sea *is* His, for He made it; And His hands formed the dry *land*.

The word “for” at the beginning of verse 3 gives the reason for worship. And it's not man-centered; its God-centered. Why should we pay attention to these ten principles of worship?

“For [or “Because”] the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land.”

The reason we are to worship is because God is the King, the creator, the sustainer and the owner of all things. Our worship should be the natural

response of creatures to their Creator. It is unthinkable that creatures would not joyfully worship their Creator. But it is unthinkable that we would not imitate them and reflect their glory. In fact, at the beginning of this service I pointed out that we are imitating God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit when we adore and praise the perfections of each Person. God does not command this because He is selfish. He needs nothing. It is impossible for Him to be selfish. The flow of God the Father's heart is to Son and Spirit, and the flow of the Son's heart is to Spirit and Father, and the flow of the Spirit's heart is to point attention away from Himself to the Son and the Father. We are God-centered because God is God-centered, but God is God-centered in a totally unselfish way. The Father praises and gives all things to the Son out of love for the Son, and the Son gives all things to the Spirit and praises the Father out of the same sacrificial love, and the Spirit does the same. For eternity past they rejoiced in each other and the Holy Spirit in this Psalm calls us to have the same infectious praise and adoration of the perfections of each Person of the Trinity.

The moment we begin introducing other reasons for worship we begin to drift into a man-centered approach, and it spoils everything. Seeker sensitive services turn everything upside down. Worship is not primarily for our benefit. It benefits us to do what we are called to do – of course. But worship is for God, and that is why we should ask God in His Word how God wants to be worshipped. D. James Kennedy tried to illustrate why the Bible and the Bible alone should define everything in worship with this illustration. He said,

Most people think of the church as a drama, with the minister as the chief actor, God as the prompter, and the laity as the critic. What is actually the case is that the congregation is the chief actor, the minister is the prompter, and God is the critic.

Perhaps a better way of saying it is that God is the audience, the one we are doing everything for. It is recognizing that worship is for God that makes us ask *God* what *He* wants. Verse 7 repeats this God-centered reason: "For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." We have been ushered by grace into a love relationship with the Trinity that makes us put off selfish criticisms like C.S. Lewis did, and we are denying the very purpose of our existence when we are not God-centered in our worship. When you are God-centered, you can put up with the person who is off key next to you. In fact, that may be yet another reason why God commands every member of the church to sing – God knew that for some of

us it would be a test of whether we worship for God-centered reasons or self-centered reasons.

## **VII. The King of worship calls us to worship Him with our bodies – bowing, kneeling, raising hands, etc. (v. 6)**

The seventh call to reformation of worship is that the King of worship calls us to worship Him with our bodies, and not just our souls. Some of you do quite well at this, and we can learn from you. Let's just think about the act of kneeling with our bodies. Verse 6 "Let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our maker." That's a switch from the celebratory worship of verses 1-3. In other Psalms, the worship of verses 1-3 might be accompanied by raised hands and heads lifted up. But there is a switch of mood in verses 6 through 7 that reflects devotion to a master and humility before God. Now, I've had Reformed people tell me that it is Roman Catholic to kneel in worship. And my response is, "So? Do you avoid everything that Roman Catholics do even if it's in the Bible? That's not being governed by the Bible; that's being governed by what others do or don't do."

If we really believe that we must follow the Bible's instructions on worship, then we don't have an option; we must use our bodies in all the varied ways that Scripture calls us to use them. Scripture calls us to raise our hands. And people think, "Oh no, I can't do that. Charismatics raise their hands." And I'm thinking, "What difference does that make? If Scripture calls you to raise your hands, raise your hands. Don't let man drive your worship; let God's Word drive your worship." Psalm 134:2, "Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary, and bless the LORD." Somebody once told me, "Well, I lift the hands of my *heart* to God," implying that he didn't need to lift literal hands. But Lamentations 3:41 says, "Let us lift our hearts and hands To God in heaven." That's hearts *and* hands. According to that Scripture, lifting your heart is not a substitute for lifting your hands. Why? Because our bodies are supposed to communicate accurately what's in our hearts anyway. It's called non-verbal communication.

What am I communicating when I sing a hymn like this? [Slouch, hands in pocket, yawn, and softly sing, "Great, is the Lord and most worthy of praise."] I would say that our body is communicating the exact opposite of what the words are communicating. Which means that you are a lousy communicator, and you need to daily practice my worksheets on non-verbal communication in order to get your body communicating properly. The Bible says that you communicate with your eyes, your face, your neck

muscles, your posture, your arms, your body movements. They all communicate, and what they are sometimes communicating is quite dishonoring to God. You wouldn't dare do that if His glory cloud appeared right here. Well, maybe that's not fair because I probably wouldn't be able to communicate; I would be speechless on my face if His glory cloud appeared. But I think you get the point.

People talk about bowing their hearts before the Lord. That's great. We do need to have genuine heart humility, but our body needs to communicate accurately where our spirit is at as well. Otherwise our bodies are saying something quite different from what our spirit is saying. When people come into worship and they look around at you, it doesn't matter if your heart is totally poured out to God, if your face is saying, "Boring" and your body is saying, "I don't want to be here," you are communicating something with your body that is quite powerful to our children. And I don't think your kids will buy it when you tell them that your heart is totally wrapped up in worship. It's non-verbal communication. And your non-verbal communication will speak a whole lot louder to your children than your words do. And by the way, pay attention to your children's non-verbal communication. It speaks volumes about where their hearts are. I never let my children get away with outward obedience accompanied by a scowling face. This is an area of instruction that parents need to give. When kids slouch, they are communicating something, and maybe something that they didn't intend. But they are still communicating. And by the way, the way you dress communicates as well. We need to think through these things.

So there is lifting up of heart and hands, but Scripture also talks about bowing of heart and hands. Paul talked about heart humility, but that was not as far as he went. He said, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 3:14) It was not just his heart; he bowed his knees. Some of you are allowing your white Anglo Saxon reservation to hinder you from obeying the Scriptures. I'm in the same boat. I'm pointing the finger at myself. If you are physically disabled, you've got a good excuse. I'm not talking to you. My mom's got a good excuse. So does Ken. But for most of us, the question should not be, "What will others think about me?" but "What does God want?" And it's clear that He wants our bodies to accurately communicate the same things that our words are saying and our spirits are experiencing. Our bodies are an important part of worship and communication.

And by the way, what we do with our bodies powerfully impacts the way we feel internally. It's unavoidable. God made us that way. In my

private devotions kneeling impacts me internally much differently than raising my head and hands toward heaven. I know I am harping on this, but it is because I think we need this area of reformation more than some churches do. I often wonder what the angels who are part of the worship service think about us. Are they shaking their heads?

Since we are to love God with all our mind, our minds should be in gear. Since we are to love with all our hearts, our emotions should be in gear. Since we are to love with all our souls, there is a relational aspect that should be in gear. Since we are called to love with all our strength, our bodies should be in gear.

So there may be times when you are so awed by the presence of God that you feel you must kneel before Him, even if it is not a corporate time of kneeling (Psalm 95:6). There may be other times that your heart is so joyful that you feel compelled to dance (Psalm 150:4). Or you may be led to say “Amen! Amen!” or some other form of verbal agreement (Neh. 8:6). Other forms of worshipping with the body mentioned in Scripture are clapping (Psalm 47:1), standing (Psalm 33:8), lying prostrate on your face (Rev. 7:11), bowing (Rev. 19:4) or lifting up one or more hands to heaven (Psalm 63:4). I’ve only given one verse for each, but the Bible is absolutely loaded with Scriptural references to worshipping with our bodies. Don’t be Greek dualists who separate between the body and the soul and who consider the body to be unimportant, or worse. And since this is God’s call to reformation and worship, it might be helpful for you to have your whole family practice appropriate bodily postures in your daily family worship. It's a safe place to practice if you are nervous.

### **VIII. The King of worship calls for changes of mood in our worship (vv. 7-11)**

The eighth principle is that God’s Word calls for changes of mood within worship services. In other words, worship is rarely one flat expression of mood, whether that expression is somber or jubilant. And we have already touched on this very briefly, but I want you to notice the changes in mood from verses 1-5, which are jubilant, to verses 6-7, which is more subdued with worshipful reverence that is appropriate to bowing and kneeling, to verses 8-11, which is somewhat sorrowful and maybe not even fun. And that’s all in the same Psalm. Our worship usually (but not always) reflects a wide variety of mood - usually it's less variety during Advent season. And depending on the theme of a service, there may be mood differences from one service to another. And I bring this up because there is a lot of teaching

out there that says that you have to progress in the mood of a service in only one given way. But let me point out that there were entire services in the Old Testament that were mellow while there were entire services that were jubilant. More often it appears that there was a mixture, like we see in this Psalm, moving from praise, to worship, to meditation, to a call to change and repent, to commitment. In fact, some people structure their worship services after this Psalm. That's OK.

But I would point out that even this order is not hard and fast. In Nehemiah 9, you find the reverse order to what you see here. In 2 Chronicles 5, it seems that the communion came near the beginning of the worship service and the praise came afterwards. In Nehemiah 8, you have yet another order with the preaching and singing coming first and the communion meal coming at the end. So even though I want you to be open to changes in mood that you find in worship services, I want to caution against thinking that our way is the only way. In fact, occasionally we may mix it up a bit just to make sure we are not stuck in a rut. God has given boundaries within which there is a lot of liberty.

### **IX. The King of worship calls for inner devotion from the heart (v. 10)**

The ninth principle of reform that was being brought by this Psalm is that the King of worship called for inner heart devotion. Obviously this point has already been assumed in what we have been talking about in the earlier points. What God was concerned about in verse 8 was a calloused heart. He says, "Do not harden your hearts." It's so easy to allow that to happen. It's so easy for us to allow frustration to make us hard hearted and not get anything out of the worship. Let me tell you something: as long as you've got a human up here, and humans in the music team at the back, and as long as you are unglorified humans, worship won't be perfect and it will be easy to grouse about. But in 1 Corinthians 10 Paul goes through a bunch of the Old Testament passages where they murmured and it ruined their worship. If our heart devotion is right, we won't complain about having so many chicken bones; we will be thankful for the chicken meat. We won't complain about the huge corncob that needs to be thrown away; we will be thankful for the corn on the corncob.

What He was concerned about in verse 10 was a people who tended to go astray in their hearts. The heart of the matter in worship is the matter of the heart. When my heart has been right with God I have been able to enter into God's presence with many different styles of worship from ultra

conservative to charismatic. It was not the externals that made the huge difference; it was the heart. Christ blasted the Pharisees in these words, “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.” (Matt. 15:8)

It doesn't matter how well we sing, pray and follow a liturgical form (whether high or low), if our hearts are far from God, He will not receive the worship. Worship is an issue of the heart. If your heart is not right, your worship is wasted. Musicians must come to worship with hearts prepared, or Amos says God will find the worship revolting. Preachers, leaders, and the worshippers themselves must make sure that our hearts are right with God and prepared for worship long before we even arrive in this building.

## **X. The King of worship calls for doing things His way in worship (v. 10)**

The last principle of reform is the Regulative Principle of worship, something we are so familiar with that I won't spend a lot of time on it. But I've summarized this point in the outline as, “The King of worship calls for doing things His way in worship.” It's only hinted at in this Psalm, but verse 10 has that phrase in it, “And they do not know My ways.” “They do not know my ways” is one of many phrases that needs to drive us back to Scripture, not man's tradition, in order to find out what God wants in worship. And the Bible says a lot more about worship services than even RPW advocates realize. It speaks to cadence, flow, energy, sound, lighting, and really everything that you need to structure worship. In fact, it says so much, that I constantly feel inadequate. But that's a good place to be because it forces us to depend upon Christ.

But back to doing things His way, Christ said, “in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matt. 15.9) in vain they worship. Our goal in this church is to have our worship governed by the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. We are not saying we have arrived. We know we have not. But we want to keep pressing deeper in our worship of the God whom we love.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I should note that finding God in worship is not guaranteed by simply coming to church. It is a blessing that we must seek with all of our heart. Verse 11 says, “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’” Here was a people who did not have the joy of God's blessing and presence. Hebrews 4 interprets this passage by saying that they had not learned God's Sabbath rest. They had never learned true worship.

While there may be much that we could debate about the meaning of these words, I think it is clear that none of us can manipulate God's presence with the way that we craft our worship. That's thinking about this wrongly. This is a call to each of us - music team and congregants. Each one of us must be a God chaser who longs for Him more than we long for the benefits that come from Him. Our goal in life must be worship from a sincere heart. God does not promise His presence to those who apathetically show up and listen. No. Worship is incredibly active. It takes energy and thought. The Bible says, "...you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deut. 4:29) God repeats that promise when He says, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jer. 29:13) During this coming year, may we be God chasers. Amen.

# **Jesus, King of Worship**

## **Psalm 95**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 12-22-2013

### Introduction

- I. The King of worship wants each of you to sing (vv. 1-2)
- II. The King of worship wants our emotions engaged, and wants energy and even loudness (vv. 1-5)
- III. The King of worship does not want you to be satisfied with anything less than His presence in worship (v. 2)
- IV. The King of worship wants musical instruments to be used in worship (v. 2 – meaning of “psalms”)
- V. The King of worship wants you to use His inspired hymnal (“psalms” in v. 2) as well as to imitate Him by creating new songs (cf. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1)
- VI. The King of worship is the One that we worship, and we should not share His glory with another (vv. 3-5)
- VII. The King of worship calls us to worship Him with our bodies – bowing, kneeling, raising hands, etc. (v. 6)
- VIII. The King of worship calls for changes of mood in our worship
- IX. The King of worship calls for inner devotion from the heart (v. 10)
- X. The King of worship calls for doing things His way in worship (v. 10)

### Conclusion

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